

CBS NEWS - IRAQ WAR BEGINS (11:35 P.M E.T - 11:55 P M E.T) (3-19-2003)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHJGD6hk5AE> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHJGD6hk5AE>)

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From Wendsday March 19th, 2003 CBS NEWS live coverage of the start of the 2003 Iraq War.

- Coverage runs from 11:35 P.M E.T - 11:55 P.M E.T

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shots of operation iraqi freedom tomahawk cruise missiles fired from u.s warships in at least one submarine aimed at baghdad and possibly saddam hussein himself america is at war this is a cbs news special report part of our continuing coverage of america at war from cbs news headquarters in new york here is dan rather it was just over 90 minutes beyond president bush's deadline for saddam hussein to leave iraq that u.s warships and planes there were stealth bombers involved launched the opening salvo of operation iraqi freedom the attack came in waves cruise missiles followed by the f-117 stealth bombers with so-called bunker busting bombs their target a bunker believed to be sheltering what are called top leaders of the iraqi regime now this is what it looked and sounded like in baghdad it was this short and this is what happened [Music] so [Music] and after the big blast began to die down there was iraqi anti-aircraft fire

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down there was iraqi anti-aircraft fire you may want to note that president bush in his address of the nation said that this was a target of opportunity and we're now getting a report from jim axelrod who is with the third infantry division in northern kuwait who says that the troops there have been told two divisions of iraqi soldiers are ready to surrender the divisions are identified as the iraqi 11th and 51st divisions now these are the people's army of iraq that three tiers is a people's army there's are the republican guards and then there are the elite republican guards these two divisions are apparently uh from the lower category now jim axelrod whom we have up now i believe by video phone uh has a report on the targets we had there were various reports and rumors earlier as to who was expected to be in the bunkers or bunker that was hit but we now have some more solid information which we believe we can report jim axelrod jim dan uh i'm with the third infantry division which are the uh the group is expected to be among the first ground troops across now i just attended a briefing the third infantry is divided into three combat brigades i was just in a briefing for the first uh combat brigade uh the officers there three bullets out of that the 11th and the 51st divisions of the uh people's army of iraq as you're describing dan are expected to capitulate this is the intelligence briefing they are expected to capitulate now this means 10 11 12 000 soldiers per division this is southern iraq uh those two divisions again expected to capitulate that's bullet one also reported in this briefing there has been no activity as of yet stressing as of yet no activity reported around the ramallah oil fields a significant problem in the past some worry about the lighting of the oil fields we can report very early on there

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fields we can report very early on there appears to be no activity iraqi activity around those oil fields third dan uh we have been given orders and the soldiers have been given orders here and the media as well been told that they will be leaving the position which is in several miles uh within the iraqi border they will be moving

their positions within the hour so an hour ago i reported to you that there was no movement in this camp that has changed uh quite a bit in the last hour a flurry of activity now and this unit the third the first brigade combat team the third infantry division will be on the move within the hour dan jim axelrod reporting live uh from kuwait we were talking about the targets the what intelligence had told the military what the military had found out about who might be in these target areas as i say there's some earlier reports including some rumors of who might be in there david martin the pentagon now has some more solid information david dan the more phone calls i make the clearer it is to me that they thought that saddam hussein might be among those leaders might be among those leaders and that this strike which the more details we learn was a very considerable strike involving three dozen cruise missiles two f-117 uh bombers uh each dropping uh a pair of uh 2000 pound bombs i believe that is a lot of uh ordinance on a target so they put everything they had into going after this bunker they thought somebody very important was there if not saddam hussein himself then senior members of his ruling clique we don't know what the intelligence was and almost certainly it was a very secret source of intelligence and it may be some time before we do know but clearly what happened is that sometime

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clearly what happened is that sometime in the late afternoon the cia got this intelligence took it immediately to the president there was a meeting in the oval office that began around 4 30. included the president the director of the cia the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff the secretary of defense the secretary of state and at that meeting they made the decision to conduct this strike and the president gave the order to carry it out and something like five hours later it was carried out so this was about as high priority a mission as you can imagine now it obviously remains to be seen what success the strikes had we do not know now if they succeeded in destroying the bunker and we do not of course know who really was in that bunker that is going to take some time to find out david is there reports unconfirmed reports floating out there not ours that say they were tracking five members of the iraqi senior hierarchy saddam himself his son oday his older son quasi and other of his sons and two senior commanders have we confirmed that we know we've heard that but do we have solid information on that i don't myself dan i i always thought the uh the number was uh 14 uh that uh they considered to be the uh the war criminals in in saddam's ruling clique whether they had the intelligence assets to track all 14 of those i really don't know david martin live at the pentagon and one wants to raise one question mark whether saddam hussein would be with both of his sons in the same place we simply don't know we have to put that in the category of question mark retired u.s army general buck kernan if a big if if sanam has been hit will that change the timing of the coming attack if it can be confirmed it could be yeah we could it could change it significantly i i think

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could change it significantly i i think it's important to point out here that less than two hours after this attack you've got two divisions that are already to surrender that's pretty unusual that suggests that the word's already gone out that something of significance was hit and possibly destroyed panic and confusion is very infectious and can run rampant very quickly through the iraqi forces so yes i think if the opportunity presents itself for a rapid capitulation of the iraqi forces the thing we want to do is very quickly move in and ensure that we can stabilize the situation general about hernan now let's go to retired air force general perry smith uh general smith in the little time we have remaining put it in context for us this rate well it was a rate an important raid a rate of f 117 a airplane single seat stealthy airplanes probably coming out of kuwait we use those in the gulf war we've used them since they carry two bombs they're gbu 27 bombs these are hardened uh 2 000 pound bombs bunker busters that go deep into into a target so they have a great potential and then of course we use cruise missiles and the cruise missiles came out of navy ships the donald cook in the red sea and also out of submarines in the red sea and also out of surface ships in the persian gulf coming in from two different directions across saudi arabia across kuwait to hit the target so you have a double bang you have the possibility of hitting with cruise missiles that have certain potential and target possibilities and also two thousand pound bombs that can penetrate more deeply and then as you look at the larger picture here i think it's important to understand that if the turks give us permission if they give us permission to

overfly that's terribly important because we can put tanker tracks up here so that the airplanes coming in from europe coming in from the states can hit the tankers and come in it's a lot shorter distance coming in through turkey than it is going all the way around here and we hope then as we go forward then that we when the air

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go forward then that we when the air attack comes in it can come in from multiple directions and be particularly uh powerful in the in the days ahead uh general smith we talk a lot about the weaponry we show people the weapons we talk about what carried the weapons aircraft submarines firing missiles but there's a reality on the ground when this kind of strike takes place now with this kind of weaponry let's make it a given that it is precise but when you deliver this kind of weaponry what's the danger to the civilian population on the ground well the danger is much much less because of the fact it's very very accurate and also we've learned a lot from precision weapons and how they come in in the direction they come in and and the bomb bursts that they create we try to have them come in so the bomb burst does not go towards civilians so in the last few wars we've learned more and more about that and and as a result of that because we can be very precise and because civilians are particularly important in this war in the sense that we're a war of liberation we will see a lot of targets not hit and targets hit with smaller weapons than you might think in order to very much minimize the civilian casualties and the collateral damage and also to mention that these weapons are not delivered uh by machinery and electronics alone that it takes people highly trained people on the submarines that fire the tomahawk on the navy ships that fire some of the cruise missiles and the pilots and those 117s that the human dimension tends to get overlooked with on television at a time like this because we have so many pictures of the equipment itself now al jazeera headquartered of course in the persian gulf the middle eastern self-described arab tv news channel says that saddam hussein will address the iraqi nation later in the day now one might put an exclamation point behind that number one is it true we have no way of knowing it number two if it turns out to be the case it means one

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it turns out to be the case it means one of two things either saddam hussein was not in the place that hit uh was hit by the era bombard knight or he survived it general buck cornette i want to get back to this business of two iraqi people's army divisions reportedly supposedly allegedly ready to surrender i want to go to the map so our viewers can understand the significance of this as well as possible most of our troop force is headquartered down here in kuwait mostly northern kuwait and the plan went after an additional much bigger aerial bombardment begins maybe in a few hours maybe in a day or two once it begins almost immediately the plan is to have a land force move out of kuwait here into southern iraq basra the second largest city in the country is down here and there's some oil fields down here now we know that there were at least two iraqi people's armies divisions down here are these that presumably the two two of the people's army divisions are down here to say nothing of the republican guard units which as i understand it are not necessarily the elite very best republican guard units which are also here roughly in the area where the euphrates river meets the tigers river yeah i believe given the fact that this was reported by the third infantry infantry division and their proximity to those conventional conscript divisions that are closest to basra this is probably those divisions and not the republican guard divisions so that's that's probably the two divisions that we're getting indications right now or they're willing to surrender now let's go to another map and talk about the significance of that uh general if you will that unlike the 1991 gulf war that the there's absolutely positively no doubt this is go to baghdad as quickly as possible and at least to the outskirts of baghdad depending on how much resistance is expected to be in

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how much resistance is expected to be in the city here's the point if down here in kuwait if they launch off when they launch off expected to be within 24 48 hours saturday night at the latest is i understand that there'll be at least a three-prong offensive coming out of here is that roughly your understanding yeah i think

what they'll do is they'll drive as rapidly as they can to the northwest toward baghdad they'll bypass those units that they don't have to engage in in particular these two units that may surrender and direct them to stay in their containment areas or wherever they happen to be right now and as long as they don't get involved they'll be safe they'll cordon off those areas those units isolate those units from being able to interdict our operations and drive northwest toward baghdad it'll be a it'll be a multi-pronged attack they'll use the high speed avenues of approach the road network six lane highway heading into to baghdad from southeast to northwest and they can also come cross country to the west swing around and then come up to the north into baghdad okay i want to quickly get to this and then move on tonight's attack was a precursor if you will a prelude to quote the big show as the military calls it which is yet to come but when the big operation comes likely to be very heavy aerial assault if not all over iraq in many places in iraq but perhaps concentrated down in this area to a certain degree because they want to move through here and get to the mesopotamia valley tigers river over here the euphrates here and move up that valley to baghdad as quickly as possible correct correct we're going to create a dilemma for them for the iraqis where we're going to come at him from a multiple of directions and what happens if some hussein blows the dams we know that there are at least two important dams roughly in this river this area one on the euphrates the other on the tigris which was they were put there partly to drain the area where the shiite muslims were and punish them but if he blows those dams is it a show stopper no it

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those dams is it a show stopper no it slows us down a little bit we'll probably all use an alternate route we've got plenty of bridging material and we can also come across country so it's by no means is a show stopper and one of the two most important oil fields in the country at least one of the two is located roughly in this area down here that's that's fire the oil fields so that slows down and if so how much well it'll slow us down on our visibility once again we can bypass that uh there's not much we can do if he was to set fire to those those oil heads um but so we in all probability would bypass them and then come in later with uh some support from contract uh oil experts to put them out now again we want to emphasize thank you general kernan that this attack tonight was for a specific purpose president bush outlined it in his address intelligence and military authorities believed that there were david martin says possibly as many as 16 members of the hierarchy we don't know whether that's a mixture of military and bath party members i simply don't know there are rumors unconfirmed reports i italicized that that saddam hussein two of his sons and some senior members were there cbs news has no information no solid information on that but so we try to be a sort of clearinghouse for rumors and uncontro unconfirmed reports tell you what we know what we don't know we simply don't know whether saddam hussein was in fact believed to be in the target area tonight one can reasonably assume but it is an assumption that perhaps he was among those believed to be that target arab we don't yet know it now shortly after the attack president bush addressed the american people and the iraqi people he said this was the opening stage of what will be a quote broad and concerted campaign to disarm iraq and free its people yet our purpose is sure the people of the united states and our

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the people of the united states and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder we will meet that threat now with our army air force navy coast guard and marines so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of firefighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities now that conflict has come the only way to limit its duration is to apply decisive force [Music] live picture in baghdad sirens have just been heard in baghdad again let's listen now we hear no explosions this is the way things started in the dark just before sunup about uh what three hours ago before sunup in baghdad but sirens went off now you can see it's daylight no one on the roads we don't see any well there's a bus passing by but very little activity and only that activity has begun just very recently we're going to leave this picture up just in case there is another aerial attack but keep in mind that among other things it's very clear that one purpose of putting a signature attack on baghdad this morning the primary purpose to hit that specific targeted targets where they thought there was a iraqi i think big al meeting underway but there's also a psychological effect that was intended here general stonewall jackson

of the stonewall jackson fame but before and during the american civil war said quote always mystify mislead and surprise the enemy unquote you can say well it's pretty obvious well it's worth repeating because unquestionably that was one of the

[00:20:00 \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHJGD6hk5AE&t=1200s\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHJGD6hk5AE&t=1200s)

unquestionably that was one of the purposes of this raid to surprise mystify and perhaps mislead the iraqis we'll leave this picture up for a bit don't hear any explosions don't hear anything it sounds like approaching aircraft and so we'll just leave this picture up for a moment as we continue to talk about that what we'll continue to talk i was listening to a report from baghdad relayed to me that said that that could be a series of all clear sirens that were sounded again we try not to speculate we just suggest that that conceivably could be what's happening but we'll see as time goes along i want to return to what happened uh tonight general um smith how do they make assessments on how successful or unsuccessful uh this flight of the 117 stealths and the hitting in there with the tomahawk missiles has been well of course they've got intelligence resources now concentrating and know the strikes coming in so they're watching the strike carefully they're watching the explosions they're seeing how close the explosions are to the target area to the exact aiming points they're shooting at and they're watching all the anti-artillery and radars to see how active their uh their air defense system is so you learn a whole lot from this that what you don't get is precise bomb damage assessment from the ground you don't get that from the ground but you can get a whole lot from the air we'll have reconnaissance airplanes coming over there today looking at it very carefully did we miss the target did we hit the target do we need to go back tomorrow the bda bomb-dabbing assessment is a very important mission but it takes a little while to collect all that material and let us hope there were no civilian casualties cbs news white house correspondent bill plant is at the white house bill well dan the president made a couple of points in his speech that he intended to try to get across to both america and to iraq he's telling the iraqis that the u.s will try very hard to spare innocent

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u.s will try very hard to spare innocent lives and that of course is something that he wants iraqis and the rest of the world the arab world particularly to believe he's also saying that the u.s has no ambition in iraq meaning that the u.s doesn't want to try to take over iraq's oil a charge that is being made in many parts of the world by people who oppose the u.s intervention there and he also had a message for americans dan he warned that this war may be longer and more difficult than people have been led to expect and his press secretary earlier today was very explicit saying americans will lose lives in this war dan bill plant reporting from the white house u.s officials now are saying without their names attached to it that the initial attack was aimed at what are called the most senior elements of the iraqi leadership and were pinpointed that's their word by u.s intelligence agencies the results were not clear uh quote one of these officials u.s intelligence had information pointing to targets of opportunity that might involve elements of the iraqi leadership might involve the source declined to identify the targets by name describing only as quote a very senior leadership and yes you've heard some names kicked around in other places but again we can't confirm that whether or not saddam hussein and or any of his sons were believed to be in the target area tonight that may become clear as the hours and days go by now recapping what we know u.s forces have launched their campaign against iraq launched at least on a limited basis they fired cruise missiles and bunker busting bombs those are laser-guided bombs from f-117 stealth bombers a so-called and i quote the principal now surgical strike against baghdad it was aimed against some senior leaders of the iraqi regime who were believed to be in a certain place the attack shook the iraqi capital

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place the attack shook the iraqi capital with repeated explosions first the crews tomahawk missiles then the laser guided bunker busters no word yet on results shortly after the missile struck and you're looking and listening to the attack itself now president bush called it the opening stage of quote a broad and concerted campaign the president emphasized that it might not be as short a war as some people believe it will be even

before the ground war starts we are told that some iraqi divisions are ready to surrender cbs news has a report from northern kuwait that two people's army divisions in iraq are said to be ready to surrender stay with cbs news for the latest on america at war when news breaks out we'll break in [Music]

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